

# It's *buyer beware* with *all* five-hole OH/MS Canadian perfins

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**M**any collectors are aware that the Canadian five-hole OH/MS perfin has been faked and that a number of these fakes are being offered for sale. The research

done by the authors has revealed that not only are there new fake OH/MS perfins on the market but that 80 to 90 percent of all five-hole OH/MS perfins in many—if not most—collections are fake regardless of when and where they were purchased.

Some of the five-hole OH/MS perfins that the authors have seen in auction catalogs were so bad that they can be positively identified as fakes from the photos alone.

Several small lots and individual five-hole perfins have been offered to the authors, some of which were guaranteed as genuine or money refunded. Most of the stamps that were examined were fakes—including all those guaranteed.

This situation, we feel, is a detriment to philately and as such should be more widely recognized.

The authors, as perfins collectors, became interested in examining the five-hole OH/MS after arguing between themselves as to whether the five-hole type came from a five- or ten-die perforating machine.

On one side you have the popular literature on the OH/MS stating that it was a ten-die machine.

On the other side, a five-die machine would be more than sufficient for the needs of the Department of Finance—plus the five-die machine was very popular at the time the Department of Finance purchased their perforating machine.

One other question kept bothering the authors: why were there so many perfins from the Department of Finance and not from the other two Federal departments that used perfins in the same era?

The search for the truth regarding the five-hole type was started with four resources.

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Figure 1. The front and reverse of the original block of 15 stamps of the five-hole OH/MS. The first die on the left of the front and the first die on the right of the reverse is Die I. All five dies are different and can be distinguished with the use of a 25-power magnifying glass.

# Five-hole OH/MS fakes are more common than the genuine ones

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- 1 The authors' collections of five-hole OH/MS perfin which have some horizontal strips of three, four, and five stamps joined together.
- 2 A library of articles and books on the subject.
- 3 Techniques that had been developed by the authors in the plating of other types of perfin. It should be noted that the five-hole OH/MS is only one of 310-plus perforated insignia found in Canadian stamps.
- 4 Three terms which other perfin collectors use. **Perfin**—a stamp perforated with a series of holes in the shape of a design or initials for security purposes (not used for canceling the stamp to prevent reuse); **Die**—a set of pins to make one complete design or set of initials; and **Perfin Variety**—a minor difference between dies mounted in a perforating machine.

## The Search

A block of fifteen 1937 George VI 1¢ green stamps (five across and three deep) was used as a starting point (Figure 1). The five stamps across were quickly identified as having five different perforated five-hole OH/MS dies in them. These, to perfin collectors, are commonly called die varieties. The stamps in the vertical rows, however, had the same perfin die as the one below.

This meant that we had just identified five different die varieties of the five-hole type. (This identification cannot be done by the naked eye or with a 10-power magnifying glass. A 20- to 25-power magnifying glass must be used.)

The other strips of stamps at the disposal of the authors with five-hole OH/MS dies were checked but no new dies were identified. The single stamps were also examined but this time very few stamps had dies that agreed with the original five dies. The covers were examined and their dies were the same as the original five dies. Two stamps tied to

paper with good Ottawa cancels were checked (Figure 2) but they did not agree with the original dies. The authors counted the stamps that had dies that matched the original five dies and found about ten copies of each die. These only accounted for approximately fifty stamps.

What about the hundreds and hundreds of other stamps with the five-hole OH/MS perforated in them that did not agree with the original five dies?

At this point, we had a lot more questions than we had answers (Figure 3). We started to identify the different dies and quickly had over sixty different dies but very seldom did the dies appear more than once or twice. We still had not checked all of the stamps for different dies when we stopped.

We started to rethink the whole problem of five-hole OH/MS perfin. Out of this two assumptions were made:

- 1 All five-hole OH/MS perfin were fakes until proven otherwise, and
- 2 All information on the subject was incomplete and thus useless until proven otherwise.

We started again on three different fronts:

- 1 Find as many strips of stamps with three or more dies in them,
- 2 Find more literature on the subject, and
- 3 Identify every die variety that we could.

The first front produced more strips, all of which agreed with the original five dies except for one, a strip of four on King George VI 4¢ yellow (Figure 4)

The second front produced much more interesting things. One was a copy of a letter written on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1947 to Mr. W. C. Gordon, Regional Director of the C.P.S. in which the dies of a five-hole OH/MS machine were perfo-

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Figure 2. This fake on a 3¢ 1932 King George V medallion issue was cancelled with an Ottawa cancel dated October 25, 1937. The perfin is fake but the authors have not passed comment on the cancel.

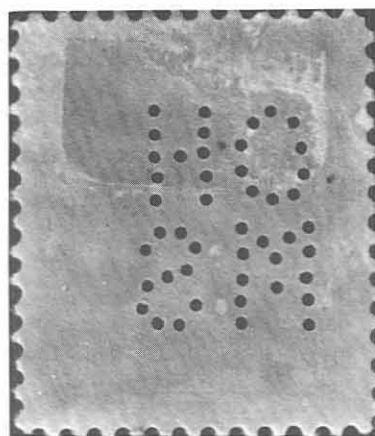


Figure 3. One forger did not even remove all of the hinge on this mint 2¢ 1937 King George VI stamp before perforating it.

# You have an 80 to 90% chance of buying a fake 5-hole OH/MS

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rated. There were only five dies, referred to as "Finance Dept. (Machine 1)" which had the second die from the left missing pin S9. Another interesting piece of information was a copy of a five-hole OH/MS perforated on a King George VI newspaper wrapper which again had five dies with the second die from the left missing the S9 pin.

With these two new pieces of information, the block of fifteen, the covers, and the stamps that have dies from the block, the authors concluded that the original five dies were indeed from the Department of Finance perforating machine and that it had only five dies.

The identification of the dies was approached but first an identification coding system had to be developed (Figure 5). The authors used holes H7 and O1 as the key holes and then noted the holes that had the greatest measured error from the master.

As a master die, the authors have chosen Die I (the first die from the left) of the Finance Department perforating machine. The code number M12-03-S8 (Die II with a missing hole at S9) represents that the M12 hole has the largest difference between that die and Die I, the O3 the second largest difference, and S8 the third. It should be noted that once an M hole (for example) has been used in the file code number it cannot be used again; therefore, M5-M8-S6 cannot be a code number. At present over one hundred different dies have been identified which means over one hundred fake five-hole OH/MS perfin dies have been found (Figure 6).

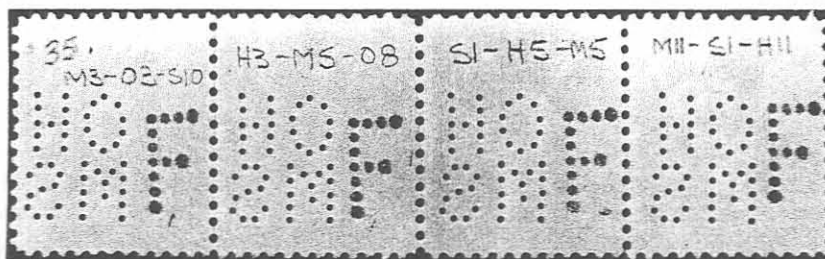


Figure 4. A strip of four fakes, all different. The machine had at least four dies in it. The strip is of the 4¢ 1937 King George VI issue.

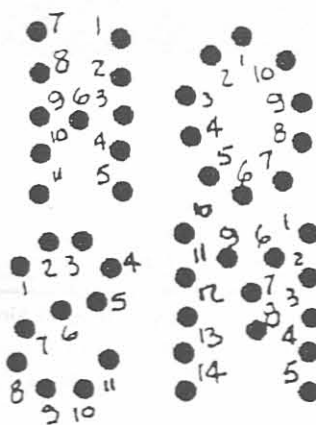


Figure 5. The code number of the holes in the five-hole OH/MS die.

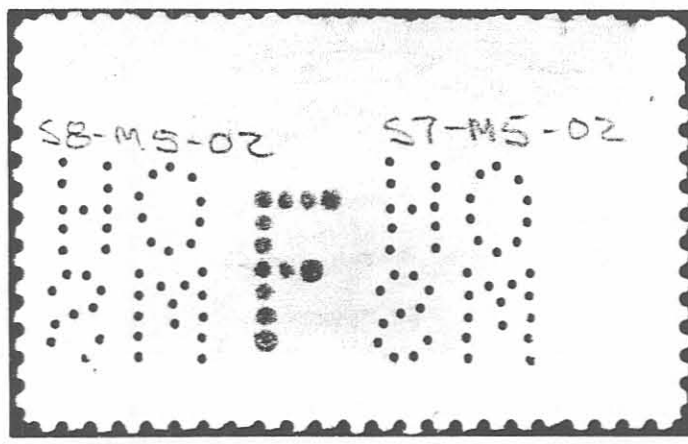


Figure 6. This fake on a 1933 commemorative 5¢ Royal William is trying to duplicate both Die I and Die II.

## The Facts—Departmental

The authors at this time would like to point out that the stamps used by the Department of Finance are not *Officials* but are *Departmental* perfins. Only stamps used by the Canadian Government as a whole can be called *Official*.

If you require more information on *Official* and *Departmental* perfins, see the June-July 1980 (Volume 1, Number 6) edition of the *BNA Perforator* published by the British North America

Philatelic Society Perfin Study Group.

The following are the documentive facts that were found on the Departmental perfins.

- The Department of Finance received approval from the Post Office to perforate OH/MS in stamps on May 23, 1923.
- The Department of Finance had offices for the Assistant Receiver Generals in Ottawa and all provincial capitals except Alberta where the office was located in Calgary.
- The Assistant Receiver General offices were changed to the Bank of Canada by the Bank Act of March 11, 1935. At that time the Victoria office was moved to Vancouver.

From the examination of philatelic material, the following were noted:

- Covers from the Assistant Receiver General offices in Victoria and Toronto;
- A parcel piece from Calgary with an Assistant Receiver General wax seal;

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# There is no evidence of real 5-hole airmails or special deliveries

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- Stamps cancelled in Calgary, Winnipeg, and Toronto; and
- Earliest dated copy April 27, 1925, and the latest dated copy October 5, 1934.

With the above information the authors concluded that the Departmental five-hole OH/MS perfin can be found on stamps issued from the Admirals to the 1934 commemoratives.

There is no evidence, to date, that stamps from the 1935 King George V Jubilee and pictorial issues were perforated. The authors, however, did find and possess a significant number of very expensive fakes of the 1935 issue (Figure 7).

## The Facts—Official

The following are the documentary facts that were found on the Official five-hole OH/MS perfin.

- The five-hole OH/MS perforator was in the hands of the Post Office in the middle of May 1939.
- The Post Office did not receive their Cummins Model 53 (ten die) machine until mid-July 1939 (four-hole OH/MS) although all government departments were instructed to be using perforated stamps after July 1, 1939.
- The five-die OH/MS perforating machine was de-

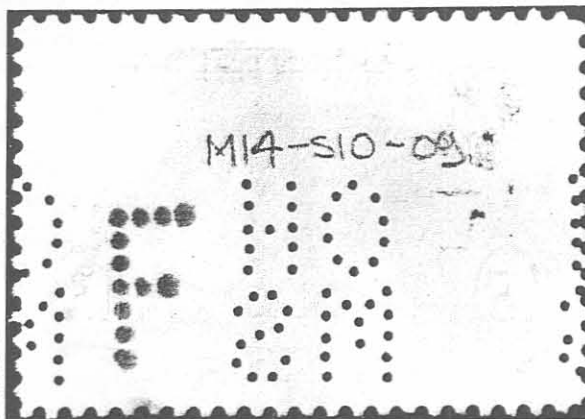


Figure 7. This fake is from a three-die machine and is on a 13¢ 1935 King George V Jubilee stamp.

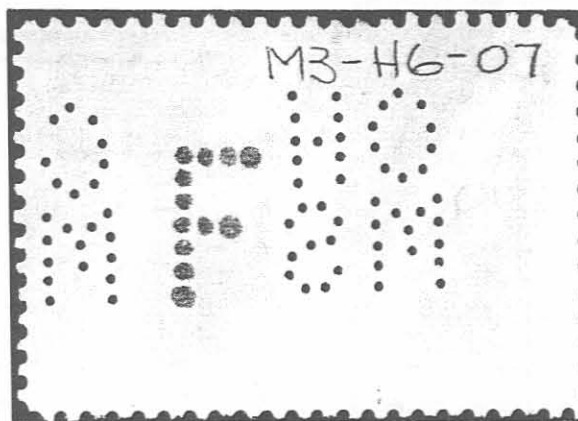


Figure 8. In this fake on a 1938 Airmail stamp, note the missing hole at O3.

stroyed (in front of witnesses) in April 1951 after spending its last years locked up in a vault.

We only found Official five-hole OH/MS perfins on the 1937 King George VI issue and the 1938 pictorial issues. No genuine Airmail or Special Delivery stamps perforated with the five-hole OH/MS were found but this does not mean that they do not exist (Figure 8).

## Conclusion

When dealing with this subject we strongly suggest that all stamps perforated with the five-hole OH/MS be considered fakes until proven otherwise.

At the present time the authors are not aware of anyone who has duplicated this research to the point of being able to differentiate between the genuine five-hole dies and the better fakes. Therefore, BUYER BEWARE. You have an 80- to 90- percent chance that you are buying fakes.

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